

WASHINGTON BACKGROUND

Democrats Revising Criticism of U-2 Case

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DEMOCRATIC leaders as well as the party's four Presidential hopefuls are reappraising their earlier criticism of President Eisenhower's handling of the U-2 reconnaissance flights in light of new disclosures made by the CIA and the Defense Department.

Following the collapse of the Moscow summit conference, Democrats and Presidential aspirants as well as some party leaders were quick to heap criticism on the President.

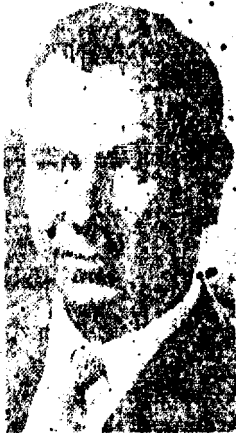
Democrats charged that the President, Defense Secretary Thomas S. Gates, Jr., Secretary of State Christian A. Hexter and Allen W. Dulles, head of CIA, had bungled by permitting U-2 flights over Russia just before the summit conference last month.

However, closed-door testimony so far taken by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is strengthening Mr. Eisenhower's hand and that of the Administration in handling the whole matter.

Latest disclosures confirm that the four-year flights of the U-2 reconnaissance planes had provided the U. S. with enough information to force the Soviet Union to embark on a vast program to relocate its expensive and complex missile launching sites after discovering that the U. S. had pinpointed their location.

GATES told Senators that the information the U-2 planes gathered was vital to the welfare of the U. S. and its Allies and was the basis for "formulating military programs," including shifts in defense spending.

The testimony also pinpoints the dilemma which confronts Sen. Stuart Symington (Mo.), one of the four Democrats battling for the nomination. Symington has been the leader in the Senate in criticizing the President's defense policies.



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Symington has persistently charged that rigidly Eisenhower fiscal policies had crippled the U. S. in offensive power, particularly in the field of space exploration. While it is admitted that Russia is ahead of this Nation in space projects, for the time being, nevertheless we do not lag behind the Communist camp in weapons.

Republicans are also questioning the argument of Sen. Symington and John F. Kennedy (Mass.) and Adlai Stevenson that the "timing" of the May 1, 1960 U-2 flight was bad and led to the wreck of the summit conference by Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev.

THE Republican National Committee says that a search of world events for the period extending back to April 28, 1959, shows that there was not a day within the May 15, 1960 date—the target which the Democrats argue that U-2 flights should have been banned—that an important international meeting or visit was not to take place.

Had the Democrats been in power and had they abided by the 15-day "gap" between intelligence flights and important world events, the U. S. would have had no inkling of what the Russians intended to do, the GOP Committee says.

Khrushchev had never publicly or privately avowed that Russian espionage agents would cease operations. For over a year from April 26, 1959, to May 1, 1960, there were scheduled 15 important international conferences.

Within that period Russian intelligence never ceased operations. If the U. S. had not followed the same policy, it might have been the victim of a sneak attack by the Communists.